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SOVIET MILITARY STRATEGY AND THE CHINESE PROBLEM

This is a working paper, a preliminary study of some military aspects of the Sino-Soviet relationship. The paper is one in a series of reports and memoranda on Soviet military strategy and related matters.

The writer has drawn liberally upon the insights and research findings of colleagues in the DD/I Research Staff and in other components of the DD/I, but is solely responsible for the paper as a whole.

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SOVIET MILITARY STRATEGY AND THE CHINESE PROBLEM

SUMMARY

It is the thesis of this paper that the Soviets have not neglected the military implications of the rift with Communist China. Having failed in the 1950s to integrate Chinese military power into a Moscow-controlled bloc-wide military entity, the Soviets have tended since to exclude China and her followers from major Soviet military planning and bloc military and economic organizations. By 1960 the close Sino-Soviet military alliance, as originally conceived, was dead, a victim of the changed political relationship between the two Communist giants.

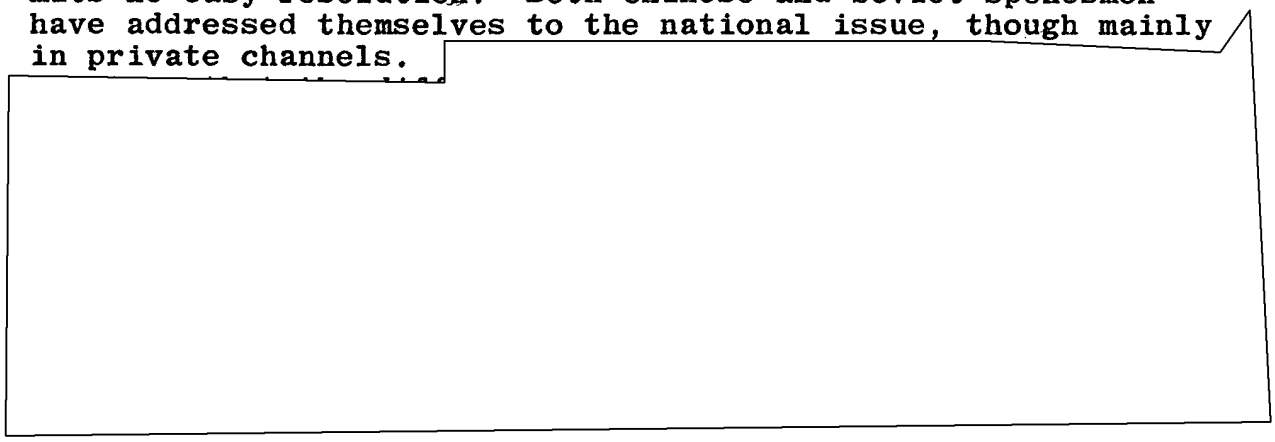
The new Soviet course has been to strengthen the Warsaw Pact as a military organization, to present it as the effective bloc military force (to the exclusion of China), to devise a doctrine on the primacy of strategic weapons (underscoring China's comparative military weakness), and to make it clear that the deterrent shield protecting China depends on Soviet good will. (The Soviets have implicitly threatened to withdraw the deterrent, which evidently never entailed an automatic Soviet commitment to fight on China's behalf, as late as January 1963.) Peiping recognizes the uncertainty of Soviet military help in time of crisis, and there is now very little military cooperation of any type between the two regimes.

The new Soviet scheme for dealing with China, moreover, appears intended to block avenues for the expansion of Chinese power and influence, and for acting militarily against China if necessary. With these objectives in view, the Soviets have denied China advanced weapons; have sought to delay Chinese development of nuclear/delivery weapons; have reduced economic and military aid to China to the minimum, short of risking the loss of Communist control of China; have formalized the military and economic isolation of the Chinese camp from the rest of the bloc; have sought to check the expansion of Chinese influence in underdeveloped areas in Asia; in supporting the growth of large neutralist countries (India-Indonesia), have been building up long-term counterweights to China in the Far East; and have taken measures to strengthen the security of Soviet borders with China, including the training of troops deployed in the Far East for combat against Chinese forces.

SOVIET MILITARY STRATEGY AND THE CHINESE PROBLEM

National Interests at Stake

Among the factors underlying the Sino-Soviet dispute, the clash of national interests looms large and clearly permits no easy resolution. Both Chinese and Soviet spokesmen have addressed themselves to the national issue, though mainly in private channels.



In their long-winded polemical articles, the Chinese have been careful to avoid stating explicitly that their dispute with Khrushchev stems largely from considerations of China's national interests (which the Soviet leader has relegated to a secondary position of importance), but they have consistently criticized the Soviet leader for binding the entire strategy of the bloc to Soviet foreign policy requirements. There is evidence that the Chinese would prefer to have this situation reversed, tying the entire strategy of the bloc to Mao's idea of foreign policy requirements for China, while hiding behind a screen of "internationalist" phrases.

As for the Soviets, there is strong evidence from a variety of sources to indicate that the Soviet leaders find themselves at serious odds with the Chinese in the realm of state as well as party relations. Soviet propaganda, as early as July 1960, intimated that the Chinese are guilty of "narrow nationalism." And recently, in the 30 March CPSU letter to the Chinese Communist Party, the Soviets warned against organizing the Communist movement along geographical, national, or racial lines.

Soviet Image of the Chinese Threat

Out of the contest of national interests arises a threat to each other's national security. The Soviet perceptions of the Chinese Communist national threat to the USSR are in some respects apparent to us. Thus, the Soviets have manifested concern over:

(a) the security of their country's extensive borders with China;

(b) Chinese aspirations to become a nuclear power;

(c) Chinese pretensions to hegemony in the Far East, Southeast Asia and South Asia;

(d) Chinese (racial and national) chauvinism in general;

(e) the magnitude of the Chinese population;

(f) Chinese interference in the USSR's pursuit of "normal" relations with the Western powers;

(g) Chinese efforts to displace Moscow as leader of the world Communist movement;

(h) Chinese efforts to undermine Soviet policies toward underdeveloped countries; and

(i) Chinese influence and interference in the internal affairs of the USSR.

At the bottom of Soviet worries evidently is the prospect of China's emergence in time as a powerful military neighbor, independent of control or strong influence from Moscow, and in possession of nuclear weapons. It is in this light that the composite Chinese threat appears particularly sinister to the Soviets.

Elements of Soviet Strategy Against China

The measures of a military-related nature which the Soviets have seen fit to take against the Chinese threat--long

as well as short run--point to the existence of an overall strategic scheme. By this we do not mean a rigid plan or blueprint but a continually evolving strategy that is based on a changing relationship with China. (We also allow for the possibility of differences among Soviet leaders on the Chinese question.) At this juncture, Soviet strategy as we perceive it is generally bent on restricting the growth of Chinese military power, whereas prior to 1960 Soviet strategy sought to promote it within predetermined bounds. The currently operative elements of Soviet strategy for dealing with the Chinese problem, we think, are the following:

(a) deny China technologically advanced weapons (nuclear and non-nuclear);

(b) delay for as long as possible, by whatever politically feasible means are available, Chinese development of a nuclear weapon/delivery capability;

(c) give various types of advanced weapons (non-nuclear) to countries such as Indonesia and India, which may employ them politically or militarily against China as well as against members of Western alliances;

(d) foster, in general, a policy of containing the spread of Chinese influence in the underdeveloped areas of the world;

(e) take measures to strengthen the security of borders with China, particularly critical areas like Vladivostok that might be vulnerable to Chinese attack and that may be targets of Chinese long-range irredentism; with the same end in view, encourage anti-Chinese feeling among border peoples in Soviet Central Asia and, in a lower key, subvert border populations in Sinkiang, Inner Mongolia and Manchuria;

(f) isolate China and her followers militarily and economically from the rest of the bloc, changing in substance if not in form the Sino-Soviet military alliance;

(g) expand Soviet influence in countries on the periphery of China, using politically feasible if diverse and seemingly contradictory methods, in order to deny them to China;

(h) in this regard, build up Mongolia militarily and economically, through integration in the CEMA community and close ties with the Warsaw Pact;

(i) reduce all forms of economic and military aid to China to the minimum (steps beyond which would give comfort to the "enemies of Communism"); in other words, do not seek the collapse of the Communist regime in China, for such a development might create an even greater threat to the USSR in the form of a neutral or even pro-Western Chinese regime; and

(j) retain sole and complete control over the Soviet strategic deterrent, so as to offer China some protection from a U.S.-led attack against the mainland while minimizing the risk of being dragged into a war with the U.S. or its allies as a result of independent Chinese foreign policy or military initiatives.

The Military Alliance in the Fifties

In the first decade of the Chinese Communist regime, China featured importantly in Soviet strategic military planning. It seems to have been the view of Soviet officialdom --of the Stalin and Khrushchev regimes alike--that the national security interests of the USSR would best be served by building up a strong modernized conventional force in China; that Chinese power would play a viable role in East-West relations, and would help to swing the strategic balance of power in the world decisively in favor of the Soviet-led "socialist camp." Soviet planners must also have calculated that the USSR, through political influence in Peiping, could exercise adequate safeguards over Chinese military forces and assure their close coordination with the Soviet high command in times of political crisis as well as in military combat situations.

A close military alliance between the two states was created in February 1950, a year after Peiping fell to the Communists, with the signing of a thirty-year treaty of friendship and mutual defense. The treaty committed the USSR to support China if attacked by Japan or "any state allied with it," but, at least in the published version, did not underwrite possible Chinese military initiatives. The treaty also provided for the return to China, after a fixed period of time,

of Port Arthur, Dairen, and the Manchurian railways, and granted China a credit of 300 million dollars. A series of economic and trade agreements were drawn up in ensuing months; China was to supply the USSR with raw materials in exchange for arms, machinery, and the services of Soviet technicians and advisers. Joint Sino-Soviet companies, modelled on those in Eastern Europe, were set up to exploit China's mineral wealth and other natural resources. Four months after the creation of the Sino-Soviet military alliance, the Korean War was unleashed by direction from Moscow. The war marked a period of very close military-political collaboration between Moscow and Peiping. It intensified Chinese military and economic dependence on the USSR, which gave generously of its resources. Throughout the conflict Moscow retained overall control of Chinese and North Korean operations, of the protracted and acrimonious negotiations (which constituted an important tactic in the management of the military crisis), and of the decision (made only after Stalin's death) to sign an armistice.

The lessons of the Korean War--notably, the willingness of China to perform loyally as a junior partner in a harmonious relationship with the USSR--undoubtedly strengthened Soviet confidence in the military alliance. Even before the USSR fully emerged from the political succession crisis--in which an important divisive issue among the contenders for power was the question of national defense and resource allocations--a renewed Soviet effort was made to strengthen the military alliance with the Chinese. In October 1954, Khrushchev and some of his supporters went to Peiping to sign the second major economic aid treaty with China, ushering in a period of massive Soviet industrial and military assistance to that country. The Soviets, to be sure, demanded repayment for that assistance. In exchange for the loan of skilled technicians and shipments of machinery and equipment vital to China's industrialization program and armaments vital to her defense, the USSR received raw materials, foodstuffs and textiles that had no direct bearing on Soviet industrial production. The priority contributions to China's industrialization program as the Russians have said, were probably of considerable cost to the Soviet economy and hindered to some extent the equipment of the

programmed Soviet industrial expansion.* They underscore the importance which the USSR attached to the military alliance at that time.

In keeping with the policy of strengthening the military alliance, Soviet assistance to the Chinese industrial-military machine continued on a large scale from 1955 to 1960. We know very little about the military hardware transferred to China. We do know that in this period the Chinese got favorable treatment among the Soviet satellites and non-bloc recipients of Soviet military aid and assistance. To be sure, the Chinese did not receive much of the first-line equipment that was being issued to Soviet troops, but neither did any other country until the switch in Soviet strategic policy that accompanied

*According to the original agreement the Soviet Union was to provide the Chinese in the second half of the fifties with approximately 560 million (new) rubles of machinery for the 156 factories which the Soviets were to assist the Chinese in constructing. In addition, there was an agreement for an undisclosed amount of military hardware to be supplied to the Chinese Communists, possibly of the same order of magnitude as the investment machinery. The machinery and equipment to be supplied amounted to only about 1.5 percent of Soviet producers durables production during the 1956-60 period. Nevertheless, the burden on the Soviet Union was quite out of proportion to the arithmetical expression, particularly from 1959 on. During the period 1955-58 the Soviets were able to allocate about two-thirds of the increment to machinery and equipment output to investment but the rising cost of military programs reversed this relationship in 1959. In the period 1959-62 nearly two-thirds of the increment to machinery and equipment output has been allocated to the military, with an attendent slowdown in Soviet economic growth and the continued poor prospects for the growth of consumption which the Soviet leaders have lately communicated to their people. Thus the burden of Soviet shipments of machinery, producers durables and military hardware to the Chinese by 1960 had become an economic burden of considerable significance for the overstrained Soviet economy.

[redacted]

the rapid deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations in 1960. (Until then, all advanced weapons in East Germany were in the hands of Soviet troops stationed there. And the armies of the East European satellites, despite their inclusion in the Warsaw Pact organization which was set up in 1955, were not assigned an important role in Soviet military planning.) In short, prior to 1960, the Soviets supplied the Chinese with the most advanced equipment made available anywhere outside the USSR, including later models of MIG's and even a few Badgers (TU-16's) and SAM's. The Soviets also helped to construct and equip aircraft plants in China. But the amount and types of aid that the Soviets gave the Chinese in their atomic energy and rocket programs is still largely a mystery.

One of the most perplexing and critical questions is whether the Soviet scheme in the 1950s--to build up Chinese military might in the "socialist commonwealth" (sodruzhestvo) --included an intention to help China become a nuclear power in a military sense. There are three distinct aspects of the nuclear question. First, it is clear that Soviet leaders from the start had no intention of giving the Chinese finished nuclear weapons. Second, there is good evidence that the Soviets were willing to promote at least a peaceful nuclear energy program in China. Following a "peaceful atoms" agreement with the Chinese in 1955, the Soviets furnished them with a research reactor along with other related equipment and began to train the Chinese in nuclear energy technology. The third and crucial question--which we cannot as yet answer satisfactorily--is whether the Soviets deliberately sought to promote a military nuclear program in China. [redacted] arguments can be brought to bear on both sides of the question. There is simply no indisputable evidence of direct Soviet assistance to the Chinese project.

We are inclined to think, on the basis of the available evidence, that the Soviet leaders were never more than very reluctant partners to any agreement to promote a nuclear weapons program in China. We think it probable that in the year or two after the Korean War, the experience of which enhanced Soviet confidence in the loyalty and tractability of the Chinese Communists, the Soviet leaders acquiesced to Chinese requests for assistance in both a peaceful and military nuclear

[redacted]

energy program.* We think, further, that the Soviets may have helped to get the Chinese military program off the ground by giving Chinese scientists basic training in nuclear technology. And if a gaseous diffusion plant does exist in China, we surmise that the Soviets helped construct it.** (The fact that all work at the suspected plant ceased for at least two years after Soviet scientists and technicians were withdrawn from China points to Soviet participation at that site.) But we think it highly unlikely that the Soviets at any time knowingly gave the Chinese the most crucial, sensitive information on nuclear weapons design. In other words, we are inclined to think that the Soviets never deliberately gave the Chinese much of the kind of technical information (which was not already general knowledge) or equipment needed for the development of an atomic bomb. And we attribute this presumed state of affairs primarily to a growing Soviet awareness in the middle and late 1950s that the Chinese would not be constant in their tractability and loyalty to Moscow.

If our thesis is correct that the USSR withheld information critical to the development and, specifically, the design of the nuclear weapon, how did the Chinese come by the essential information (assuming that they have it)?

**Recent U.S. national estimates say it is "probable" that the plant in question (at Lanchow) is a gaseous diffusion plant.

of this in any of the many public and private Sino-Soviet polemics of recent years.*

All the while that the Soviets sought to strengthen the military alliance with China on Soviet terms in the years 1955-59, forces were at work in China to reduce Chinese military dependence on the USSR and to improve their junior position in the alliance. As early as 1955, the Chinese leadership had evidently decided to strive for self-sufficiency in armaments production. (Thus, at a National People's Congress in Peiping in July 1955, a senior official, Yeh Chien-ying implicitly deplored China's dependent status, declaring that "our industry must be speeded up in order to remedy China's inability to provide the armed forces with the most modern equipment.") On an either/or basis the Chinese would prefer to purchase the means of production rather than the finished weapons, so as to reduce reliance of Soviet good fellowship.

In the late 1950s, the Soviets saw still more reasons to question their earlier assumptions about the loyal subservience of the Chinese. Following the announced Soviet ICBM test in September 1957 the Chinese began to view the world strategic situation differently than the Soviets. In their public discourse, the Chinese took a more optimistic view of the Soviet strategic position than the Soviets themselves did, and regarded the USSR as capable of taking greater risks than Soviet leaders were inclined to take.

It has been persuasively argued in a number of places that the November 1957 Conference of Communist parties in Moscow was of critical importance in the Sino-Soviet dispute over strategy and the question of nuclear weapons sharing. It was at that time that Khrushchev probably balked at giving the Chinese serious assistance in the development of their own nuclear weapons as well as finished nuclear weapons. This would help to explain why in the following year, the Chinese publicly reasserted the validity of the traditionalist military doctrine expounded by Mao and vigorously disparaged nuclear weapons; rebuked professionalism in the PLA; rejected the implicit pleading of professionals for a crash nuclear program in China; and generally made it clear that Chinese nuclear weapons would have to await the time when Chinese industry, science and technology were sufficiently developed to produce them. If they had been granted substantial Soviet aid for the development of an indigenous nuclear weapons program, the Chinese would not have had to assert the need to develop an industrial scientific base first. Indicative of the pessimism in Peiping on this matter was the statement made by

by Marshal Ho Lung on 1 August 1958 that China could not rely on "outside aid" in trying to solve its military problems. (The day before Ho's warning, Khrushchev, alarmed by a sharp upsurge in Chinese propaganda calling for the "liberation" of Taiwan, arrived in Peiping for an unannounced three-day visit.)

The Taiwan crisis of 1958--the result of a Chinese foreign policy initiative--probably had a critical effect on Soviet attitudes toward the military alliance with China. The eagerness of the Chinese in the Taiwan affair to pit Soviet power and prestige against U.S. power in the area must have had a sobering effect on Khrushchev. The crisis dramatized for him the danger that China could drag the USSR into a catastrophic nuclear war with the United States. Khrushchev's anxiety over the possible consequences of the Sino-Soviet military alliance in the Taiwan crisis is seen in the extremely cautious way that he raised the Soviet deterrent shield to protect China from the U.S. threat. Only after the U.S. made it clear that there was no plan to attack Communist China and Chou En-lai made an offer to negotiate did the Soviet leader recall the USSR's commitment to defend China.

Also during this period the Soviets unsuccessfully sought closer cooperation between the Soviet and the Chinese operational military commands. In this respect, the Soviets made several proposals for military cooperation that were rejected by the Chinese for unspecified reasons. Specifically, Peiping is reported to have rejected Soviet proposals for the establishment of Soviet submarine, missile bases, air bases and radar installations in China.* Peiping reportedly also rejected Soviet-proposed arrangements for joint air defense in wartime, that is, mutual use of the other's bases.

A proposal had also reportedly been made to set up a joint naval command in the Far East; although it could not be determined from the reports what the terms of the proposal were or which party initiated it, it seems likely that the Soviets preferred it and the Chinese rejected it on the grounds of being alloted a secondary role.

There is yet another discordant element in the Sino-Soviet military relationship during the decade (the 1950s) of generally close political and military association. This pertains to the historic anxiety that the Soviets have manifested over their borders with China. Since World War II, Soviet military contingents have been constantly deployed at various points along the Sino-Soviet border, in addition to the regular border troops performing routine security duties there. The Soviet forces were kept there with some fluctuations in their complement after the withdrawal of the U.S. ground threat from the area, after a "friendly" Communist regime was set up in China, and after the Korean War was terminated; and they have been deployed in a manner that would permit quickest penetration into China. (In European Russia, the bulk of Soviet combat-ready forces has also been concentrated in border areas to facilitate a rapid thrust into Western Europe as well as to deal with emergencies in the satellites.) Soviet forces deployed near Chinese territory moreover, have never to our knowledge participated in joint military exercises with the Chinese. (In contrast, the Soviets in the 1950s held combined exercises with neighboring East European armies.) As will be shown shortly, Soviet forces in the Far East have been trained to act against a possible Chinese enemy.

The New Soviet Concept of Bloc Military Power

Taking stock toward the end of the first decade of Chinese Communist rule, the Soviet leaders saw plainly that they had failed to achieve their main strategic objectives regarding China and that there were very dim prospects for attaining them. The USSR had not managed to integrate Chinese military power into a Moscow-controlled military entity; had not strengthened Chinese loyalty and subservience to the USSR (of the sort in evidence in the Korean War); and had not increased Chinese military dependence on the USSR but lost much

ground in this respect. The Soviet leaders may also have been concerned that the substantial contributions that the USSR had made--at no small cost--to the Chinese industrial-military machine not only were not paying dividends, but had helped to create a significant potential threat to themselves.

By spring 1960, when political tensions between the two allies flared up, the Sino-Soviet military alliance as originally conceived was all but dead. From the Soviet standpoint, the nature of the alliance had to change once the USSR could no longer sufficiently influence Chinese foreign and military policy from the center--i.e., Peiping. This was a sine qua non for the alliance, as conceived by the Soviets. Without confidence in political influence over Peiping, Moscow could not assign China a place of importance in Soviet military planning, for there would be no assurance that the Chinese would execute the military-political tasks assigned it in time of crisis. Perhaps more important, the USSR would be vulnerable to extreme military risks from any commitment to China's defense in a crisis involving the United States. As Soviet behavior in the 1958 Taiwan crisis seems to suggest, at no time was the Soviet commitment to act on China's behalf automatic, but was to be determined at any juncture on the basis of a careful Soviet evaluation of the actual situation. The treaty insofar as it extends the deterrent shield to China was not abrogated--for it still served Soviet purposes: As long as the USSR can manipulate its nuclear deterrent on China's behalf, it is in a position to limit and perhaps define the nature of overt Chinese military moves. For, as the 1958 Taiwan crisis has again shown, China cannot achieve even local objectives in the face of U.S. opposition without overt Soviet backing.

The changed political relationship between Moscow and Peiping resulted in a Soviet decision that the national interests of the USSR would best be served not by the buildup of a bloc-wide, loose military organization, but by the concentrated buildup of Soviet military power and that of satellites militarily controlled by Moscow through the instrument of the Warsaw Pact. Thus, the new Soviet course introduced in early 1960 was to strengthen the Warsaw Pact as an operational military organization, while de-emphasizing Soviet reliance on Chinese military strength. By late summer of 1960, the whole complement of Soviet scientists, engineers and technicians, with few exceptions, was withdrawn from China. In doing this

the Soviets virtually sabotaged the entire Chinese industrial effort. Also Soviet-Chinese cooperation in nuclear energy was henceforth restricted to the innocuous non-military research conducted at the Soviet-controlled Dubna Institute, where most bloc countries have been represented.

It is also noteworthy that in early 1960, the Soviets (at Khrushchev's initiative) came forth with a new military doctrine of primary reliance on nuclear/missile weapons that further widened the gap between Soviet and Chinese military thought, policy, and force structure. The import of the new Soviet military doctrine (which in time underwent important modifications) dramatized China's continuing military weakness compared with the military postures and strategies open to the USSR and the United States. Incensed over this development, the Chinese leadership within a week after Khrushchev announced the new doctrine made it clear (in a resolution of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress) that China had great power pretensions, aspired to become a nuclear power, would not permit its interests to be disregarded by the great powers (the USSR and United States), and would not be bound by Soviet commitments to the West (as in disarmament agreements).

It has only been in the past three years that the Warsaw Pact--created in 1955 as a political counter to NATO and as a means for exerting control over the satellites--has featured significantly in Soviet war planning. Since 1960, after the fallout with the Chinese, the Soviets have been pressing the development of the military capabilities of the Warsaw Pact alliance. The armed forces of the Warsaw Pact member states have been strengthened and re-equipped with up-to-date Soviet weapons; and increased emphasis has been placed on integrating Warsaw Pact forces in exercises. Of late, Soviet military spokesmen have given prominence to the Warsaw Pact, portraying it as the effective military organization of the socialist camp. This was strongly intimated by Marshal Malinovsky in his Army-Navy Day speech of last February. In an obvious rebuff to China, Malinovsky stated that the Soviet armed forces are "developing and strengthening their combat comradeship with the fraternal armies of the socialist countries united by the Warsaw Pact"; he observed that the socialist states--with the implied exclusion of China and its followers--have "merged their economic and military potential," i.e., through the CEMA and Warsaw Pact; and he equated the

Soviet-allied governments with the Warsaw Pact member states, noting that their armed forces were, along with Soviet forces, brought to a state of "complete military readiness" during the Cuban crisis. It is also noteworthy that while China was never a member of the Warsaw Pact, that country was represented at meetings of the organization by "observers." But no Chinese "observers"--whether by their choice or by Soviet decision--have attended Warsaw Pact meetings since March 1961. (China's follower Albania, according to Soviet statements has "excluded itself" from the organization.) Also significant and related to this development was the effective exclusion of China from the future economic life of the bloc with the reorganization in mid-1962 of CEMA, now portrayed as the viable economic organization of the socialist camp.

These developments do not necessarily affect the willingness of USSR to pose as protector of the entire socialist camp and of Cuba as well. Soviet spokesmen continue to do this; witness Khrushchev's 27 February election speech. But what the Soviets are saying now, it seems, is that the bulwark of defense of the socialist camp is the Warsaw Pact and first of all the USSR, not the armed forces of the camp as a whole. Hence, though they "cordially" extend the protective umbrella of the strategic deterrent over other countries building socialism, the Warsaw Pact countries headed by the USSR may withdraw that protection. An implicit threat to this effect was made in a Pravda editorial as late as 7 January 1963. Threatened withdrawal of the Soviet shield against attacks on China was also implied in Soviet statements in the past, as in Marshal Malinovsky's remarks on 24 January 1962, when he spoke of the Soviet ability to defend socialist countries "friendly to us." That ominous distinction between friendly and unfriendly socialist countries was repeated by the Soviet Ambassador in Peiping in the following month and used again in a March 1962 issue of the Soviet Defense Ministry journal,

KOMMUNIST OF THE ARMED FORCES.* In other words, the Soviets have threatened abrogation of the Sino-Soviet treaty in the event that the Chinese do not heel to.

The Chinese, for their part, take a very conservative view of the possibility of Soviet military assistance in the event of Chinese involvement in a military crisis.

(We share the scepticism of the Chinese about Soviet willingness to fight on China's behalf, especially in the event of U.S. involvement in a military crisis with China. We think that it is almost certain that the Soviets would not enter the conflict on a predetermined basis or become automatically involved through a treaty commitment. The Soviet

*The first threat of this type was made in an article by S. Titarenko in the 16 August 1960 issue of SOVIETSKAYA LATVIA:

> Can one imagine a successful construction of socialism in contemporary conditions even in such a great country as, let us say, China, if this country was in an isolated situation, not supported by the cooperation and mutual help of other socialist countries? It would have been subjected to an economic blockade from capitalist countries; such a country at the same time would be subjected to military blows from outside. It would have been tried by greatest difficulties even in the event it could withstand the mad onslaught of the enemy.

decision to intervene, and the method of intervention, will most probably depend upon a Soviet evaluation of the general situation at the time of the crisis.)

In the current stage of military relations, there is very little military cooperation of any type between China and the Soviet Union. And the Soviets, significantly have done nothing (apart from taking note, in Soviet propaganda, of Chinese complaints) to bring a halt to U-2 reconnaissance flights over China. In addition, evidence of the lack of liaison between China and the USSR on matters of military policy was provided by Ulbricht last January at the Sixth SED Congress. The East German party chief complained --as no other bloc source had previously done--that China failed to give advance notice to the bloc of its intention to attack India. (By the same token the Soviets probably did not inform any bloc member of their intention to move strategic weapons into Cuba.)

The question of dealing militarily with the Chinese threat has not been raised in Soviet military writings-- The subject is obviously a sensitive one and could not be expected to be aired publicly. The absence of any reference to the Chinese problem in the available military articles may be explained by the penchant of the security-conscious regime to discuss delicate questions--such as the Chinese problem, the role and capabilities of the Soviet ICBM force, contingency planning for local military crisis--only among those immediately concerned--i.e., those having a "need to know." It is also possible that a doctrine has not been worked out, and will not be, that is explicitly addressed to the Chinese problem. It may be felt that this is strictly a political question, that doctrine governing the use of forces against the Western allies may also apply (minus nuclear weapons) to the possible Chinese enemy. (In this respect, it is noteworthy

that problems of conducting operations in desert regions and in the Far East, in general, have been discussed in the doctrinal materials.)

Strategy to Prevent Nuclear/Missile Diffusion

The USSR, it is clear, has sought to prevent the Chinese from becoming a nuclear power for as long as possible. With this objective, the Soviets have not given the Chinese nuclear weapons (or modern delivery vehicles) and, have denied aid to the Chinese nuclear energy program since re-evaluating the strategic consequences of that aid several years ago. The Soviets have also explored, but for the time being evidently shelved, the idea of concluding an agreement with the U.S. with the object of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to countries which do not now possess them. The Chinese, for their part have publicly attacked the U.S. position--and by implication the Soviet--on a test ban and nuclear non-diffusion on the grounds that it is designed to deprive China of the possibility of becoming a nuclear power while preserving existing U.S. (and Soviet) military might. The Chinese have sharply and directly attacked the Soviets for this attempt. The apparent Soviet decision not to press for agreement on a nuclear non-diffusion pact may have been the result of a decision that such a pact would probably not have any effect on China after all; that the established policy of denying any Soviet assistance is about all the USSR can hope to do to slow down the pace of China's work in the nuclear field.

The Soviets have, of course, also denied the Chinese any finished missile delivery systems of strategic range. It appears in retrospect, however, that the Soviets did help the Chinese to get some kind of a guided missile program off the ground. The supposition that the Soviets gave the Chinese substantial assistance in their guided missile program is based mainly on the similarities of certain Chinese launch facilities to those in the USSR. Since 1960, the Chinese missile program has progressed very slowly, evidently having been set back drastically when the Soviets withdrew. What is more, the Soviets have in the past year evinced a desire to prevent the Chinese from acquiring strategic missiles in the

future through international agreement. In this respect, Gromyko's proposal, first made at the UN in September 1962 and reintroduced only last month at Geneva, that the U.S. and USSR agreed to the maintenance between them of a limited number of missiles for a limited period of time, has strong anti-Chinese overtones. By singling out the U.S. and USSR as the only two countries to be excepted from the provisions for total destruction of delivery vehicles in Stage I of general disarmament, the proposal implied that other countries will not have their own defenses at a time when, presumably, the danger of possible strategic attack remains.

The Soviets, in short, seem to have concluded that they cannot prevent the Chinese from acquiring a nuclear/missile capability; all they can hope to do, it seems, is to defer the time when the Chinese will realize this goal. Various Soviet statements foresee an early Chinese nuclear explosion; even outside Soviet estimates place it within three years time.* But the Soviets evidently have not yet made adequate preparations for the arrival of that moment of truth. Some kind of detente with the West--perhaps in the form of a disarmament arrangement--may have appeared to the Soviets to be a promising way to put curbs on China once it becomes a nuclear power. But as recent reports have pointed out, the Soviets at the disarmament table are still (early 1963) pessimistic about a breakthrough in disarmament in the near future; they point out that the politicians and the military in the USSR must first reach a common ground before technical plans for an accomodation with the U.S. can even be considered. And, most important, [redacted] reports the view of Soviet colleagues that the Soviets do not even discuss what will have to be done with the Chinese Communists or Chinese resistance in this field, if the accomodation point should be reached."

There are conflicting reports about how the Soviets think the Chinese will act once they acquire a limited nuclear capability. [redacted] the opinion the Chinese are radical maniacs prone to reckless military

*Statements of this sort may reflect tactical Soviet positions in disarmament discussions with the West.

adventures; that Chinese leaders really believe that a nuclear war would destroy capitalism and thereby leave the field clear for Chinese survivors to build a new world. [redacted] that China's apparent propensity to adopt a hard-line and warlike attitude toward the West is nonsense; they characterize the Chinese as "barking dogs without teeth" since they speak of nuclear war without themselves possessing nuclear weapons; and they predict that once the Chinese acquire a nuclear capability of their own, they will speak in a more responsible fashion. [redacted] Soviet public opinion, registering the effects of the regime's propaganda effort to discredit the Chinese, tends to take a fearful view of Chinese possession of nuclear weapons. Some Soviet citizens commenting on the subject to foreigners reportedly seem to feel that nuclear weapons in the hands of the Chinese would be directed primarily against the Soviet Union. When told that it seemed likely that Communist China would develop a nuclear device within the next year or two, one Russian, for example, observed, "Well, I suppose they will still have to build bombers before they start dropping them on us."

Trade and Aid Developments

The Soviet policy of slowing down China's progress toward becoming a military-industrial power has been in force for three years now. Soviet military aid and assistance to China is now very small, although not cut off altogether. (An example of the extremely selective and low-level military assistance [redacted] And Soviet trade with China has continued to decline. Sino-Soviet trade, according to recently published Soviet trade figures, amounted to some $600-700 million in 1962. This figure is a third less than it was in 1961 and represents a two-thirds drop from the peak of $2

billion in 1959. The Soviets still sell China some petroleum products and a few basic heavy industrial items. But even this may go by the board.*

The Border Problem

Soviet concern over the Sino-Soviet borders long antedates the ideological polemic between Peiping and Moscow. The Soviets since World War II have kept sizeable ground forces in several areas near the Chinese border--and have strengthened those forces in recent years. The Soviets have evidently long been aware that the Chinese might habor expansionist ambitions, and have of late been given strong reason by the Chinese to fear and take precautionary measures against possible Chinese incursion in Soviet frontier areas. A number of border incidents have probably served to heighten Soviet suspicision of Peiping's intentions. In 1960 reported an incursion by armed Chinese from Sinkiang into the Kirgiz SSR.

More border incidents occurred in spring and summer of 1962.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Then in March, Peiping openly raised the border question in a People's Daily editorial. The editorial used Khrushchev's sarcastic jibes about Chinese caution in dealing with Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan as a peg for bitter discussion of the "unequal treaties" by which the Chinese Empire was shorn of its rights and territory. Tsarist Russia was named as one of the offending colonial powers, the author of three of the nine agreements specifically mentioned. This discussion was followed by a restatement of Peiping's declared intention to examine in good time all treaties concluded by previous Chinese governments and to accept, revise, or abrogate them as it sees fit.

The Soviets now maintain just under ten percent of combat-ready forces in the Far East.* Major concentrations of ground forces in Sino-Soviet border areas include three rifle divisions and one airborne division in the Dushanbe - Tashkent - Alma Ata area; three tank and two rifle divisions in the Irkutsk-Bezrechnaya area; one rifle and one airborne division in the Blagoveshchensk-Belogorsk area; and six rifle divisions in the southern Primorskiy Kray. At least some of these units seem to have trained for the possibility that they would have to protect Soviet territory from an attack by the Chinese. It is also noteworthy that the Soviets have in

*The paragraphs on the deployment and exercises of Soviet forces in the Far East were prepared with the help of the Military Division of OCI.

[redacted]

recent months deployed new air defense radar units near the Manchurian border and along the Soviet-Mongolian border. This pattern of deployment reflects a felt need in the USSR to increase coverage of aircraft approaching from the direction of China.

In March 1962 a Soviet field training exercise countered an attack from across the Manchurian border southward into the Lake Khanka area of the Primorskiy Kray. This is an area which Russia acquired by the Treaty of Peking in 1865, which the Chinese have threatened to abrogate. Because large Soviet ground force exercises almost invariably are conducted on the terrain and along the area anticipated under wartime conditions and under as realistic conditions as possible, it appears that the exercise envisaged a Chinese Communist drive from the north toward Vladivostok.

While this was the first firm indication that training of this scope and nature takes place, there are suggestions that a wariness on the part of Soviet military planners as to China's intentions has existed for several years.

It does not appear that Peiping wishes to become embroiled in frontier clashes with the Soviet Union. Since the summer of 1962, however, there have been a number of reports which suggest Peiping has started to strengthen border defenses in the key Manchurian area by introducing troops where there had previously been only police and frontier guards. More

The Pursuit of Mongolia

While economic and military relations between the USSR and China have deteriorated to the extent of virtual isolation of China from Soviet-controlled intra-bloc military and economic organizations, Soviet relations with Mongolia have taken a sharp positive turn. In July 1961, Soviet presidium member Suslov was sent to attend the Mongolian Party Congress, at which he made a reference to the "firm security" of the Outer Mongolia borders on both the Chinese and Soviet sides. In this he may have been reassuring the Outer Mongolian Party that Moscow would not tolerate Chinese attempts at border adjustments. (Chinese Communist maps, unlike Soviet ones, have persistently shown the Sino-Mongolian border as undelimited.) In June 1962, Mongolia was made a full member of CEMA, and there is some evidence of closer military ties between Mongolia and the Warsaw Pact--although Mongolia has apparently not been admitted to full membership, evidently for reasons of its very delicate geographical position. In July 1962, Marshal Rokossovsky made a protracted visit to Mongolia that may have had important consequences for Soviet-Mongolian military relations. While there is no evidence of a recent re-equipment program for the Mongolian armed forces (intelligence on this subject is sparse), it seems likely that the Soviets have taken steps to strengthen Mongolia's defenses. Hints of such action were heard in a Soviet broadcast of 18 March recalling the history of USSR-Mongolian military ties. The broadcast claimed that in recent years the Mongolian army has received modern aircraft and tanks. Reflecting Soviet concern over Chinese Communist intentions toward Mongolia, the broadcast also pointed out that the Soviet-Mongolian mutual defense treaty concluded in 1946 has been an important factor in safeguarding peace in the Far East.

The Soviet Strategy of Containment

It is now clear that the USSR wishes to check the increase of Chinese influence not only across the frontiers of the USSR but in South Asia and Southeast Asia as well. It is a well-established fact that the Soviets have for some time been trying by a variety of means to wean Communist North Korea and North Vietnam away from China, and to isolate the

Chinese militarily and economically within the bloc. In this connection, it also appears to be a long-range Soviet objective to support the growth of large neutralist countries in Asia that could be used as counterweights, in a geopolitical sense, to Chinese power in the area. Soviet support to the military establishments of such countries as Indonesia and India, while varying greatly and serving different objectives, seems to be designed to serve this objective as well. Recent indications of Soviet eagerness to render military assistance to Burma and Cambodia--countries in which Chinese political influence already predominates--are also suggestive of a Soviet interest in improving the position of the USSR in the area, at the expense of the Chinese. Similarly, Soviet behavior in the very complex Laotian situation may also be said to have anti-Chinese overtones: to the extent that they have cooperated in sponsoring the present arrangement for governing the country, the Soviets have helped to forestall what would amount to a Chinese Communist takeover of the country.

The anti-Chinese nature of the Soviet decision to supply India with some modern military equipment--including MIG 21's which had been denied to China--for use against Chinese forces in the Indian border dispute is self-evident. To be sure, in supplying India with military aid, the Soviets are seeking to recoup bloc prestige which suffered a general reduction in India as a result of the military clashes along the Sino-Indian border last fall. The Soviets are strongly motivated, further, by a felt need to prevent a drastic swing on India's part from non-alignment to closer relations with the U.S. and U.K. But the fact remains that the Soviet transfer of weapons to India at a time of conflict with China demonstrates additionally the Soviet desire that the weapons be used politically or militarily against the Chinese, as a rebuff to apparent Chinese pretensions to political hegemony in the area. The fact that the amount of Soviet military aid to India is small is not important, it seems to us: the Chinese threat to India was itself small, for the Chinese had no intention

of overruning India last October. What does seem important is that the Soviets demonstrated an earnest to check the expansion of Chinese political influence in South Asia, notifying Peiping that Moscow would not tolerate Chinese hegemony in that area.

Like India, Indonesia is a powerful force in its area of the world. The military strength of Indonesia, the fifth largest country in the world, is already unequaled in Southeast Asia. And as in India, the Soviets find in Indonesia a useful counterweight to Chinese influence and possible expansionist tendencies in Southeast Asia. The Soviet decision to support the Sukarno regime and to build up the military establishment there, at the expense of the Communist-radical movement in that country, was taken with a number of objectives in mind. As is known, the Soviets have provided Indonesia with a vast amount of military aid and assistance. Beginning in early 1961--after the Soviet fall-out with the Chinese--the USSR began to pour first-line military equipment into Indonesia, much the same kind of equipment simultaneously being issued Soviet troops. Included in the military shipments were SAM's, Komar boats and MIG-21s. Moreover, the Soviets have been urging the Indonesians--who appear to have reached a saturation point, probably because of the great cost of the purchases--to accept still greater amounts of military aid. By the time of the West Irian affair, the Soviets had already provided Indonesia with a much greater military capability than needed to deal with any of her neighbors or even with the Dutch.

Undoubtedly a major objective of the massive Soviet MAAG program in Indonesia is the denial of that country to the West, and it is probably hoped that Indonesia will at one point or another use its forces politically or militarily against a Western alliance member. But it also seems likely that Soviet strategists are counting on Indonesian military power being directed politically and even militarily against China as well. It has no doubt been apparent to Soviet planners that Chinese ambitions for political hegemony throughout Southeast Asia are potentially on a collision course with Indonesian expansionist designs. Indeed, the Soviets have been publicly supporting Indonesian opposition to the proposed Maylaysian Federation and have apparently been privately egging the Indonesians to take over Borneo and Sarawak. The Chinese, on the other hand, have given only very weak propaganda support

for the Indonesian position, harboring as they most likely do grave misgivings about increments in the power and prestige of the third largest country in Asia.* (Moreover, the willingness of the Indonesians to purchase vast amounts of up-to-date Soviet military equipment may have sprung not only from a desire to possess and flaunt the status symbols of big power, but also from the fear that Indonesia will ultimately have to defend itself against Chinese Communist influence or attack.)

There is yet another important anti-Chinese aspect of Soviet military aid to Indonesia. A fundamental Soviet strategic requirement is of course to prevent China from gaining political control over Indonesia. We surmise that China probably presents a greater threat to Soviet interests in Indonesia than does the United States, and that this threat will increase should the U.S. military presence in Southeast Asia be reduced or withdrawn in the future. Within Indonesia, the Soviet MAAG program is bolstering the government and the military establishment, the leaders of which are strongly anti-Communist. While the Soviets almost certainly hope to promote pro-Soviet feelings among the military through close association with Soviet military officers and training in the

*The strongest statement of Chinese sympathy with Indonesian opposition to the Maylasian Federation was made by Liu Shao-chi during his recent visit to Indonesia and incorporated in a joint Indonesian-Chinese communique marking the conclusion of his talks with Sukarno. But this expression of common views only papers over basic differences in the national interests of the two countries.

USSR, the policy of strengthening the military establishment is bound to have the effect of postponing to a more distant future the possibility of a Communist party takeover. Indeed, the arms given Indonesia can be used at some point in the future against the Communists in that country. But that is desirable, from the standpoint of Soviet national interests, for the Communist-radical movement in Indonesia is under preponderant Chinese influence. Thus, in the contest for influence in Indonesia, the Soviets have chosen to combat the Chinese by backing the neutralist regime and the anti-Communist army against the Indonesian Communist party. This situation could develop into one of the most turbulent pockets of the Sino-Soviet dispute.